

10-1-2009

## Faculty Recital: Goldberg Variations

Jean Clay Radice

Mark Radice

Mary Holzhauer

Elena Nezhdanova

Josh Oxford

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/music\\_programs](https://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/music_programs)



Part of the [Music Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Radice, Jean Clay; Radice, Mark; Holzhauer, Mary; Nezhdanova, Elena; and Oxford, Josh, "Faculty Recital: Goldberg Variations" (2009). *All Concert & Recital Programs*. 5238.  
[https://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/music\\_programs/5238](https://digitalcommons.ithaca.edu/music_programs/5238)

This Program is brought to you for free and open access by the Concert & Recital Programs at Digital Commons @ IC. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Concert & Recital Programs by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ IC.

ITHACA COLLEGE  

---

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

FACULTY RECITAL

Jean Clay Radice, harpsichord  
Mark A. Radice, harpsichord  
Mary Holzhauer '08, '09, harpsichord  
Elena Nezhdanova, harpsichord  
Josh Oxford '07, harpsichord

Hockett Family Recital Hall  
Thursday, October 1, 2009  
7:00 p.m.

ITHACA

## PROGRAM

Aria mit verschiedenen Veränderungen  
(aria with diverse variations)

Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685–1750)

*Goldberg Variations*

*Clavier-Übung IV*

BWV 988

Aria

Variatio 1. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 2. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 3. Canone all' Unisono, a 1 Clav.

Variatio 4. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 5. a 1 ovvéro 2 Clav.

Variatio 6. Canone alla Seconda. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 7. a 1 ovvéro 2 Clav.

Variatio 8. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 9. Canone alla Terza. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 10. Fugetta a 1 Clav.

Variatio 11. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 12. Canone alla Quarta. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 13. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 14. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 15. Canone alla Quinta. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 16. Ouverture. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 17. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 18. Canone alla Sexta. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 19. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 20. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 21. Canone alla Settima. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 22. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 23. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 24. Canone all' Ottava. a 1 Clav.

Variatio 25. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 26. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 27. Canone alla Nona. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 28. a 2 Clav.

Variatio 29. a 2 ovvéro 2 Clav.

Variatio 30. Quodlibet. a 1 Clav.

Aria

To receive occasional emails from the School of Music about upcoming concerts,  
send an email with your name and address to: [concerts@ithaca.edu](mailto:concerts@ithaca.edu)

Photographic, video, and sound recording and or transmitting devices are not permitted in  
the Whalen Center concert halls. Please turn off all cell phone ringtones.

Johann Sebastian Bach's *Aria mit 30 Veränderungen* (aria with thirty variations), the so-called *Goldberg Variations*, were written for two-manual harpsichord. They were probably composed in 1741 and published immediately by the Nürnberg publisher Balthasar Schmidt as *Clavier-Übung IV*.<sup>1</sup> To date, no manuscript in Bach's hand has been found; however, Bach's personal copy of the first edition was discovered in the 1970s by Christoph Wolff<sup>2</sup>

The variations were commissioned by Count Hermann Carl von Keyserlingk of Dresden. Tradition dating back to Bach's first biographer, Johann Nikolaus Forkel, has it that Keyserlingk employed Johann Theophil (=Gottlieb) Goldberg as his harpsichordist. The Count suffered from bouts of insomnia. In this early use of music therapy, he commissioned the variations and would call upon Goldberg to play for him during his sleepless nights. (Was Goldberg also insomniac?)

The account raises some questions, primarily because Goldberg would have been very young indeed in 1741, since his baptism date is recorded as having been 14 March 1727.<sup>3</sup> Even granting that the baptism may not have taken place soon after the birth, he could not have been more than fifteen or—assuming that the date of 1742 assigned to the *Goldberg Variations* by some scholars is correct—perhaps sixteen. Certainly, accounts indicate that Goldberg's skills at the keyboard were phenomenal, but one must wonder.

The *Goldberg Variations* are hardly music to induce sleep; nevertheless, they must have provided some comfort for Count Keyserlingk judging from the fact that as an expression of his gratitude for the composition, he presented Bach with a golden chalice filled with 100 *Louis d'or*.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The year proposed is explained in Gregory G. Butler, "Neues zur Datierung der *Goldberg-Variationen*," *Bach-Jahrbuch*, 74 (1988), 219. Schmidt attended the University of Leipzig beginning in March of 1726 and may have been a student of Bach's. He regularly engraved works by Bach, including Keyboard Partitas Nos. 1 (1726) and 2 (1727), *Clavier-Übung III* (1739), and the collection titled *Einige canonische Veränderungen über das Weihnachtslied*: "Vom Himmel hoch, da komm' ich her" (1748).

<sup>2</sup> In that copy, Bach noted some revisions. For more, see Christoph Wolff, "Bach's 'Handexamplar' of the *Goldberg Variations*: A New Source," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 29 (1976), 224–241. See also Wolff, *Bach's Handexamplar der Goldberg Variationen: Eine neue Quelle*. (Leipzig: Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Norman Rubin, "Goldberg, Johann Gottlieb," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (accessed 17 September 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Consider that in 1803, Wilhelm Friedemann Bach offered a full year's cycle of Bach's cantatas (approximately fifty scores) to Johann Nikolaus Forkel, Bach's first biographer, for twenty *Louis d'or*. Even more telling is the fact that Forkel could not afford the twenty *Louis d'or* to complete the purchase. See Forkel's letter regarding the proposal in Albert Schweitzer, *J. S.*

The premise of the thirty variations is an “aria,” which appears earlier in the second *Notenbuch für Anna Magdalena Bach* (musical notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach; 1725) as item XXVI. Its placement there with works by various composers has led some scholars to conclude that the theme, like that of Beethoven’s *Diabelli Variations*, was the work of another.<sup>5</sup> The Aria in G major is a balanced binary design with sixteen measures in each half. The bass line shows some similarity to the “Ruggiero”, a common ground bass used for variations during the 16th and 17th centuries. The harmonic implications of the bass line provide the foundation for ten sets of three variations each, the third of which is a canon. The first of the nine canons is at the unison, the second at that interval, the third at that interval, and so on. The ninth canon, Variation 27 is at the ninth. In no previous work by Bach do we find canonic organization of this sort acting as an essential structural element; however, Yo Tomita has shown that Bach almost certainly got the idea from the Dresden composer Jan Dismas Zelenka.<sup>6</sup>

Another intriguing feature of the Aria with Thirty Variations is the pervasive use of number symbolism. Even the most skeptical critics, confronted with the intricate and consistent use of the numbers 14 and 41 to represent both B-A-C-H (i.e.,  $2+1+3+8=14$ ) and J. S. B-A-C-H ( $9+18+2+1+3+8=41$ ) in the chorale prelude “Vor deinen Thron tritt’ ich hiermit,” and with the use of the letters in his name to create the motif B-flat, A, C, H (i.e., B-natural) in *Die Kunst der Fuge*, the *Canonische Veränderungen über das Weihnachtslied*: “Vom Himmel hoch, da komm’ ich her,” and elsewhere must concede that these cryptograms are undeniable and deliberate thumbprints. They appear with particular consistency in the works of the 1740s. In the Aria with Thirty Variations, one need look no farther than the first two measures of Variation 1 for evidence of this.

---

*Bach*; trans. Ernest Newman (New York: Macmillan, 1911; reprinted New York: Dover, 1966); vol. 2, p. 354.

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Neumann, “Bach: Progressive or Conservative and the Authorship of the *Goldberg* ‘Aria,’” *Musical Quarterly*, 71/3 (1985), 290–293. Neumann makes the point that a borrowed opening theme would balance well with Variation 30, the quodlibet of songs that also are not the work of Bach.

<sup>6</sup> Yo Tomita, “Bach and Dresden: A New Hypothesis on the Origin of the *Goldberg Variations* (BWV 988),” *Music and Theology: Essays in Honor of Robin A. Leaver* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 177–185.

## Variatio I. al Clav.



In the first four measures of the treble, 41 notes appear. In counterpoint to this statement of 41 notes, the first and second of the left-hand measures have seven notes each; thus, the two together yield 14.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to the structural role of canons and the pervasive use of musical cryptographs, the *Goldberg Variations* are striking for their use of progressive musical features, especially two musical devices associated particularly with the rather recent style known as the *style galant*. Those devices are: (1) frequently changing division of the beat into either duplets or triplets and (2) hand crossing. Though these musical materials are by no means “new,” they are nonetheless hallmarks of *galant* keyboard music. Moreover, Bach’s use of both is so pervasive and, indeed, extreme that there can be no doubt that he was consciously demonstrating his knowledge of and facility with the most recent stylistic trends.<sup>8</sup>

If the “aria” that opens the set of variations is, in fact, not by Bach, then Variation 30 assumes special significance since it, too, uses material composed by anonymous, other composers. It is a quodlibet (literally “whatever you like”). Typically, pieces of this type combined various well known melodies, often with a humorous intention. Bach follows this tradition by choosing two secular melodies, “Ich bin so lang bei dir nich g’west,” and “Kraut und Rüben haben mich vertrieben.” (“I haven’t been with you in so long,” and “Cabbage and beets have driven me away” respectively.)

The exact significance of these songs is not quite clear. The former is a suggestive ditty that might have aroused laughter; likewise, “Kraut und Rüben” may not necessarily indicate those two vegetables. The juxtaposition of the two—standard fare in German cuisine during most of the year—usually leads to a mishmash of sauerkraut vinegar and the pervasive blood of the beets. Is Bach alluding to the combination of the songs at hand? Perhaps the tunes were known to Count Keyserlingk, or to Goldberg, or maybe both.

<sup>7</sup> For details, see Walter Schenkman, “Tatlow’s Bach Signatures in the *Goldberg Variations*,” *Bach: Journal of the Riemenschneider Bach Institute* 34/2 (2003), 63–106.

<sup>8</sup> See Mark A. Radice, “The Nature of the *Style galant*: Evidence from the Repertoire,” *Musical Quarterly*, 83 (winter 1999), 607–648.

The quodlibet in Variation 30 is followed by the restatement of the opening Aria. If we count the opening Aria, the thirty variations, and the final restatement of the Aria, the total number of movements played is thirty-two. As noted previously, the Aria is a balanced binary design with sixteen measures in each half, a total of thirty-two measures; thus, the number of measure in the aria is the same as the number of movements in the entirety of *Clavier-Übung IV*, the so-called *Goldberg Variations*.

MAR